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Letter dated 24 May 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The present letter is submitted in response to the request contained in the thirteenth paragraph of the statement of 25 April 2016 by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2016/5) that the Secretary-General present a plan outlining the manner in which the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen would support the next phase of its work with the parties, in particular its support to the Yemeni parties in developing a road map for the implementation of interim security measures, especially at the local level, withdrawals, the handover of heavy weapons, the restoration of State institutions and the resumption of political dialogue.

Since the uprisings in Yemen broke out in early 2011, I have been actively engaged, through my good offices, in helping Yemenis to find a peaceful solution. The United Nations provided support for the negotiations between the Government and the opposition, which resulted in the signing of the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its Implementation Mechanism, in Riyadh on 23 November 2011. The United Nations has since remained actively engaged with all Yemeni political groupings to facilitate and provide support for the effective implementation of the Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism.

In a letter dated 18 June 2012 (S/2012/469), I had the honour to inform the President of the Security Council of my intention to establish a small Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen in order to fully meet the expectations of the Security Council contained in its resolutions 2014 (2011) and 2051 (2012). The President of the Council responded in a letter dated 21 June 2012 (S/2012/470) that the members of the Council had taken note of the intention expressed in my letter.

Since the establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy in 2012, the United Nations has provided support for the Yemeni-led political transition process and has promoted inclusive participation, including of previously marginalized groups, such as women, youth, the Houthis and Southern Hirak. With the support and facilitation provided by the United Nations, Yemenis concluded a National Dialogue Conference in January 2014, which brought together 565 delegates from all of the regions and political groupings of Yemen. The outcome document of the National Dialogue established the foundations for a new federal and democratic Yemen, with support for the rule of law and good governance. A Constitution Drafting Commission was created in order to draft a new constitution based on the National Dialogue Conference outcomes.

Despite important progress in the political transition, conflicts between the Houthis, other armed groups and government forces led to an escalation of military violence in mid-2014. Notwithstanding agreements brokered by my then Special Adviser, the Houthis and allied units of the armed forces seized control of Sanaa and other parts of the country in September 2014 and over the ensuing months.

The United Nations facilitated numerous rounds of negotiations in an attempt to resolve the political impasse, but these efforts were ineffective to halt the escalation of military confrontations. In March 2015 the Islamic State claimed responsibility for attacks on two mosques in Sanaa, killing hundreds of worshippers. In the same month, Houthi-allied air force units bombed the presidential palace in Aden, where President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi had taken refuge after fleeing Sanaa. At the request of the President, a coalition of countries led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily on 26 March 2015 in order to secure the return of the Government. Ground fighting between Houthi forces and Houthi-allied segments of the national army against Government of Yemen forces and allied militias intensified and spread, triggering a humanitarian emergency. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other such terrorist groups have actively exploited the chaos, extending their control over significant areas and conducting frequent attacks against government and civilian targets in many areas.

In its resolution 2216 (2015) the Security Council requested me to intensify my good offices role in order to enable the resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led transition. Since then, my Special Envoy has facilitated successive rounds of consultations, including direct talks in Switzerland in June and December 2015, in order to obtain a cessation of hostilities and a resumption of the political transition process.

My Special Envoy convened a new round of peace talks, hosted by Kuwait, which commenced on 21 April 2016. The Security Council, in the aforementioned statement of the President of the Council of 25 April 2016, expressed support for the Kuwait talks and called upon the Yemeni parties to develop a road map for the implementation of interim security arrangements, especially at the local level, withdrawals, the handover of heavy weapons, the restoration of State institutions and the resumption of political dialogue.

In order to alleviate the humanitarian situation and create an environment conducive to the talks, a cessation of hostilities negotiated by my Special Envoy came into effect on 10 April 2016. Despite ongoing challenges in Ta'izz, Al-Jawf and Ma'rib, the cessation of hostilities has led to a decrease in the level of military violence in most parts of the country. The De-escalation and Coordination Committee, composed of military representatives of the two sides, is operating from Kuwait and local de-escalation committees have been established in six governorates to provide support for the cessation of hostilities. The nationwide cessation of hostilities remains extremely fragile and requires urgent additional support from the United Nations. The deterioration of the cessation of hostilities could undermine the Kuwait talks and derail the progress towards greater stability and security.

The Kuwait talks are a crucial step for creating a positive political dynamic and for developing a road map for the return of Yemen to a peaceful and orderly political transition. While both sides have committed to reaching agreements in

Kuwait, there remain deep differences between the two sides which will need to be overcome in order to achieve a successful outcome.

Helping to ensure the success of this process and the implementation of any agreements emerging from Kuwait is one of my top priorities. This will require continued support from the international community, especially States in the region. It will also require the United Nations to increase its mediation and facilitation efforts to provide support to the Yemeni parties, as well as additional substantive expertise in the design of interim security arrangements, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, ceasefires, disengagement and other security sector issues.

The Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen will continue to exercise my good offices with a view to facilitating the conclusion of a comprehensive settlement that will bring about a permanent end to the conflict and agreement on a road map for the completion of the remaining tasks of the Implementation Mechanism of the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference. The Office will also continue to carry out the tasks as enumerated in the aforementioned exchange of letters with the President of the Security Council in June 2012 (S/2012/469 and S/2012/470).

In order to fulfil the new responsibilities and tasks pertinent to the plan requested by the Security Council in support of the Yemeni parties and the peace process, I intend to strengthen the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen to undertake the following main functions:

(a) Lead United Nations assistance, in the Kuwait talks and subsequent consultations, in facilitating and providing technical advice on the negotiation and design of:

(i) Interim security arrangements, including the formation of security committees, the negotiated withdrawal of militias and armed groups and the orderly handover of heavy weapons to the State;

(ii) The restoration of State institutions, including respect for the legally established lines of authority and the removal of any obstructions to the proper functioning of State institutions;

(iii) The preparations for the resumption of political dialogue, including agreements for finalizing and adopting the draft constitution, undertaking electoral reform and holding general elections;

(b) Lead United Nations assistance with regard to expanded facilitation and the provision of technical advice to the Yemeni parties with the aim of ensuring greater respect for and compliance with the cessation of hostilities, including through support for the De-escalation and Coordination Committee, local committees and additional local mechanisms;

(c) Lead United Nations assistance for the implementation of the initial stages of agreements concluded in Kuwait and in subsequent consultations and to plan and prepare for the provision of United Nations support for the implementation of more comprehensive agreements.

The Special Envoy for Yemen will continue to exercise my good offices role, including through regular and frequent visits to Yemen and close engagement with

all Yemeni sides and international and regional partners. The expanded Office will require staff with expertise in political mediation and facilitation, electoral affairs, ceasefires, disengagement, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, other security sector issues and the accompanying administrative, security and support services.

The enhancements of the Office of the Special Envoy would be conducted in two phases. The first phase would provide support for the cessation of hostilities, the design and negotiation in the above-mentioned areas, the initial stages of implementation in Sanaa and the planning and preparation of broader United Nations support for the following stages of implementation, in full consultation with the United Nations system. The second phase would provide support for the implementation of agreements more comprehensively in several locations outside Sanaa. It would only be initiated if and when the Kuwait talks or subsequent rounds make further progress towards a comprehensive settlement.

I intend to move the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen from New York to Amman as soon as practicable. It would serve as a staging ground to provide support for operations in Yemen. The presence of the Office in Sanaa would remain limited in the first phase, but would increase over time as the security situation permits. The security situation would be monitored closely and mitigating measures would be adjusted to the threat level assessed. In this context, it bears repeating that all parties must provide for the safe, rapid and unhindered access by humanitarian and United Nations personnel, in particular safety and security personnel and security equipment, in order to ensure the delivery of mandates.

I count on the support of the Security Council for my approach. A detailed budget proposal outlining the resource requirements for strengthening the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen would be submitted to the governing bodies, as appropriate.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon